
CHILD SAFETY TIPS

by

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Children are totally dependent on their parents for protection. Knowing this, we as parents must take the responsibility of insuring that our children are protected to the best of our abilities. Accomplishing this means that parents must take an active role in every aspect of their children's safety. This role must extend beyond the home and into every area of the child's life. This involvement should continue until your children are old enough to take responsibility for their own protection. The following information will provide you with some basic tips for improving your child's safety.

General Safety

- Be a safety role model for your child.
- Remember, when it comes to your child's safety, you direct others, they don't direct you. You set the standard for your child's safety, not them.
- Communication between parent and child regarding safety issues should be open, realistic and designed to educate, not to instill fear or panic in the child.
- Take steps to identify and correct safety hazards in your child's home and play environments.
- Begin teaching safety to your child as early as possible.
- Always maintain an active role in your child's safety.
- Know where your children are at all times.
- Be familiar with your child's friends and their parents.
- Be familiar with your child's daily activities.
- Be familiar with your neighborhood.
- Teach your child to memorize their name, address, telephone number, parents' names and places of employment.
- Teach your child to recognize unsafe situations.

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- Teach children to trust their own feelings, and assure them that they have the right to say NO to what they sense is wrong or dangerous.
 - Teach your child that no one should approach them or touch them in a way that makes them feel uncomfortable. If someone does, they should tell you immediately.
 - Be alert to a teenager or adult who is paying an unusual amount of attention to your child, or giving them inappropriate or expensive gifts.
 - Teach your child to report dangerous or suspicious situations to you, a teacher, etc..
 - Teach your child to yell or shout loudly when they are in danger.
 - Teach your child to run away from danger and seek help.
 - Teach your child how to use a telephone and how to make emergency telephone calls for help. Teach your child how to dial the “operator” and “911” on your home telephone, public pay-telephones and cellular telephones.
 - Post emergency telephone numbers near your home phone.
 - Teach your child how to read a map.
 - Develop a “safety password” or “family codeword” with your child. This password or codeword is established to assist the child with identifying persons, other than the parents, that they should go with. The child should be taught that if another adult attempts to take them anywhere, and doesn’t have the proper password/codeword, they should not go with that adult and seek help from a teacher, policeman, etc..
 - Teach your child to accurately describe persons and vehicles.
 - Teach your child not to take candy or other gifts from anyone without your permission.
 - Teach your child to never get into anyone’s car without your permission.
 - Teach your child never to play in deserted buildings, heavily wooded or isolated areas.
 - Survey your neighborhood and identify areas which you consider to be dangerous. Discuss these areas with your children, explaining the reasons why they should not play in these areas. Create a neighborhood diagram to assist you in the discussion.
 - Know your child’s routes to school, friend’s houses, neighborhood play areas, etc..

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- Children should be taught that no one should touch the parts of their bodies which are covered by a bathing suit.
 - Instruct your child to report incidents or attempts of molestation.
 - Establish telephone check-in procedures with older children.
 - Parents should learn infant and child CPR and First-Aid.
 - When children are riding in your car they should be safety fastened with their seat belts and small children should be placed in child safety seats.
 - Consider self-defense training for your child.
 - Have your child fingerprinted. Store the fingerprints in a safe place.
 - Keep current information regarding your child's personal history, medical history, friends, school, etc. to be used in the event the child becomes missing.

Safety In Public Places

- Never leave a child alone in a public place, not even for a minute.
- Teach children about the safety risks present in public places, such as becoming lost, abductions, bullies, fires or other emergencies, etc..
- Define what and who is a stranger.
- Teach your child that adults should not be asking children for directions or assistance, they should be asking other adults.
- Teach your child to scream if someone tries to take them away.
- Never leave your child unattended in a car.
- Teach your child about public restroom safety, or escort them to the restroom.
- Teach your child how to locate help if they become lost in public. Instruct them to seek out store cashiers or managers, policeman, fireman, security officers, etc..
- Teach children not to let strangers take pictures of them.
- Teach children to travel and play in groups while in public.

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- Know the names of other children your child is with.
 - Don't place your child's name on the outside of their clothing.
 - Teach your child never to hitchhike.
 - Teach your child to refuse all automobiles rides from adults, even if the adult is known to the child. **Remember Password Safety!**
 - Teach your child to move away from a car that pulls up beside them if they don't know the driver.
 - Teach your child to be cautious while walking through parking lots.
 - Teach your child not to go into people's houses without your permission.
 - Consider using a wrist or waist harness for children while in crowded public areas such as airports, bus terminals, shopping centers, etc..
 - Consider using an electronic locating device that activates if the child becomes separated from you.
 - Keep a photograph of your child with you at all times while in public. If your child becomes missing it can be given to security or police personnel to assist in locating the child.

Safety At Home

- Don't leave young children at home unattended.
- Teach children never to say they are alone if they answer the telephone.
- Teach your child never to answer the door without your permission.
- Teach your child never to answer the door if they are alone in the house.
- Teach your child never to let anyone into the house without your permission.
- Teach your child how to escape the house in the event of a fire.
- Keep all firearms maintained at the house secured, unloaded and completely away from children. If firearms are kept in the home, the entire family should consider attending a firearms safety education course.

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- Any additional weapons (knives, pepper spray, stun guns, etc.) kept in the home should also be secured and kept out the hands of children.
 - Teach children to keep all doors and windows locked if they are home alone.
 - Post emergency telephone numbers near the home telephone, include neighbors' telephone numbers.
 - Keep all medicines secured or out of the reach of small children.
 - Keep all cleaning supplies or other poisonous substances secured or out of the reach of small children.
 - Keep all lighters and matches secured or out of the reach of children.
 - Teach children basic first-aid or what to do if they injure themselves while home alone.

Babysitter Safety

- Check the backgrounds of all babysitters entrusted with your children.
- Maintain a list of all trusted babysitters.
- If medicines must be given to your child, prepare the medication in advance into its correct doses and leave written instructions for giving the medication.
- Make sure babysitters have some knowledge in child care giving, don't just assume they know how.
- 12 years old should be about the minimum age for a babysitter.
- Babysitters should provide you with references. You should check them.
- Make sure the babysitter knows CPR and first-aid.
- Establish a clear understanding with the babysitter as to the way in which your child is to be cared for, fed, disciplined, the rules of the house, etc.. There should be no surprises when it comes to your child's welfare.
- Create written instructions for babysitters detailing how to care for your child.
- Don't allow babysitters to have friends over while watching your child.

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- Make sure babysitters have proper emergency contact information.
 - Make sure babysitters know how to make emergency calls to police, fire department, emergency medical services, etc..
 - Instruct babysitters not to give out personal family information to persons over the telephone.
 - Instruct babysitters not to allow anyone into the house in the parents' absence.
 - Instruct babysitters what to do in the event of a fire at the house.

Daycare Center Safety

- Choose a reputable daycare center. Check references.
- Check employee's credentials and level of training.
- All center personnel should be trained in CPR and first-aid.
- Ask if pre-employment background investigations are performed on all center employees.
- Inspect all areas inside the building, including offices, storage rooms and restrooms.
- No areas within the center should be considered off limits to parents. If the center's staff refuses inspection by a parent, it should be considered suspicious and the child should be removed from the center.
- Determine what policies and procedures exist regarding child discipline.
- Ask how child abuse situations are prevented at the center.
- Inspect all toys, equipment and play areas to ensure they are safe.
- Check for overall cleanliness at the center.
- Check for overall safety at the center.
- Ask about the center's fire safety plan.
- Determine what access control procedures are used at the center.

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- Leave written instructions regarding any special dietary or medical care your child requires.
 - Leave written instructions regarding who can pick up your child.
 - Make sure policies exist that require you to be notified before your child can be taken away from the center on field trips or for any other reason.
 - Visit the center at various unannounced times and observe activities happening at the center.
 - Ask your child questions about activities at the center.

School Safety

- Inspect and become familiar with all areas at your child's school.
- Evaluate the policies and procedures of the school security and safety program.
- Leave written instructions with teachers and the school office regarding who can pick up your child from school.
- Meet with your child's teachers often to discuss any problems your child may be having.
- Ask your child questions about activities at school.
- Consider becoming a volunteer at your child's school.

Internet Safety

The Good News:

- The Internet is a great place to make new friends, create fun clubs, research exciting topics such as history, travel and hobbies.
- Using the Internet is rewarding for parents and children alike and serves as an excellent tool for school/work projects and gaining knowledge of computers.
- Chat programs can bring family members closer together and cut down or eliminate long distance telephone charges. In addition, meeting people from all over the world and learning about different cultures is possible.

The Bad News:

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- Just like a real community, the Internet can be a dangerous place for anyone who is unaware of the risks.
 - There are people who find it easier to prey on others on the Internet due to the virtual anonymity provided.
 - There are many documented cases of cyber-stalking, child predation and info-theft due mostly to the fact that people don't understand or underestimate the actual dangers.
 - Pornographic sites are rampant.
 - Child predators are widespread.

The Tools:

- Parental Supervision is the number one tool in the fight for online safety.
- Child education should be fundamental prior to Internet usage..
- Filtering software and family rules should be added to assist in times where parents might not be available or present.
- Trust should be built between the child and parents. Tools are only good when they are used.
- Make children aware of chat room dangers such as child predators, scam artists and tactics. Although not topics that we enjoy talking about, these in fact are more important than the ones we do enjoy. Knowledge of the risks lowers your potential for getting hurt in any situation.

Chat Tips:

- Parents should make their children aware of tips like these and discuss the reasons for using them. When using general chat programs and services, talking to hundreds of strangers is very common. Of course, meeting people means first talking to strangers, but some common rules can lower your risk and enable you to have productive and fun conversations.
- Never give out your real last name. Chat networks usually use nicknames anyway, so there is no reason to tell anyone your real name.
- Never give out your address or telephone number. Predators can use any one piece of information to find out other personal information.

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- Never give out the city or town you live in. As with telephone numbers, this is another common tracking tactic.
 - Never give out your email to strangers. Email can also be tracked, traced or used to gain more personal information. It is also a tool of choice for cyber-stalkers and can be used to propagate viruses and junk mail.
 - Do not volunteer any personal information as to your daily routine, activities, school/club functions or interests, outside basic conversation. In other words, don't get specific about your daily life. Generally speaking, hobbies are easy to talk about without getting into details and routines. If anyone starts asking questions which you feel are personal in nature, consult an adult immediately. Never trust someone else's word on the honesty or reliability of an individual.
 - Never assume someone's age, gender, location, name or intent.
 - Never download anything from someone you don't know, either via email, or ICQ, irc, etc. (definitions of those terms can be found in the glossary)
 - Never open any attachments to email from someone you don't know.
 - Never open without virus scanning, attachments from friends if that attachment was forwarded multiple times.
 - Never access web sites that ask your personal information or ask you to start programs within the web site without parental supervision.

Filtering web content:

- Filtering tools are great ways of providing a certain amount of security in what a child can or cannot access on the Internet. Filtering tools work by denying access to specific web sites or web sites containing words or content which are deemed inappropriate. Parents wishing to find out more about filtering tools can email Info@proresearchgroup.com or read about the programs on their online web sites.
- Top rated Internet filtering tools.
Price about 40 dollars each.
- www.surfwatch.com
- www.netnanny.com
- www.cyberpatrol.com (good one for AOL)

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- www.cybersitter.com
 - Below are instructions for operating your browser's built in filtering. Although not as specific as a filtering program, it provides some useful assistance.

Internet Explorer 4x and 5x

- Click HELP.
- Click "CONTENTS and INDEX"
- Click the INDEX tab.
- Type the word FILTER.
- Select "filtering inappropriate content."
- Choose your options.

Netscape Navigator/Communicator 4x

- Click HELP.
- Click NETWATCH
- A web page will open with on screen instructions for setting up NetWatch®

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